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Chapter Two: Lesbian Philology in Early Print Commentaries on Juvenal and Martial

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Scholars primarily concerned with vernacular traditions have explored the ways in which the reception of classical texts during the Renaissance influenced the representation of sex between women.¹ In the pages that follow, I extend this exploration by considering early neo-Latin print commentaries on Martial’s *Epigrams* and Juvenal’s *Satires*. These works contain some of the most sustained Roman accounts of erotic relations between women. Early print commentaries on them can help us understand not only how late fifteenth century humanists made sense of representations of female homosexuality but also, given the popularity of a few of the commentaries, how such representation were framed for some subsequent Renaissance authors versed in Latin. Many of the commentaries considered below include three significant elements, of which two have already received critical attention in other contexts: references to Sappho’s same-sex interests, important because there is a debate about when in the post-classical period she became known for her erotic predilections, and discussions of the tribade, a figure from Greek and Roman antiquity who re-emerged in the Renaissance and came to provide the period’s most common way to refer to women who have sex with women.² (The tribade derives her name from the Greek verb τρίβω, ‘to rub’, because of the sex act with which she was originally associated, namely rubbing her clitoris against or in another woman’s genitals.)³ The third

element, which is particularly intriguing because recent scholarship would not lead us to expect it, is lesbian cunnilingus.⁴

Woman-on-woman oral sex has gone all but unmentioned in the literature on sex between women in the Renaissance, presumably because of a lack of evidence in the materials considered by scholars.⁵ And yet it features prominently in some of the humanist commentaries on Martial and Juvenal. Domizio Calderino (1447-1478) offers the most spectacular example in his gloss on *Sat.* 6.306: *i nunc et dubita qua sorbeat aera sanna* ('Go on, ask yourself why she sneers as she sniffs the air')⁶ in his influential 1475 Juvenal commentary: *Hoc est quo pacto possit expirare dum occupata est in lingendo cunnum, nam dum lingat naso tantum respirat ore occupato*, sig. e1v ('This is how it is possible for her to breathe while engaged in cunnilingus, for while she licks she breathes through her nose alone since her mouth is busy'). While Calderino's clever explanation appears unprecedented, he was hardly unique among humanists in considering oral sex part of the lesbian sexual repertoire. The only Juvenal commentary printed earlier than that of Calderino, the 1474 *Paradoxa in Iuvenalem* by Angelo Sabino (fl. 1460s-1470s), did not address *Sat.* 6.306, but did mention woman-on-woman oral sex in its glosses on adjacent lines. Two of the four subsequent fifteenth century printed Juvenal commentaries also referred to the practice in their discussions of *Sat.* 6.306 or of the surrounding text, if never with quite the same verve. Moreover, many of these commentaries adorned their remarks with a line from Martial about an oversexed tribade named Philaenis with a penchant for cunnilingus: *undenas uorat in die puellas*, 7.67.3 ('she devours eleven girls a day').⁷ In his 1474 Martial commentary, Calderino also evoked cunnilingus when addressing this line. The materials considered in this

chapter thus demonstrate that explicit references to woman-on-woman cunnilingus were indeed available in the Renaissance, at least within a specific set of neo-Latin texts.

Intriguingly, all three of these elements—Sappho’s sapphism, the tribade, and woman-on-woman cunnilingus—appear in Juvenal commentaries for the first time in the early 1470s. There are no references to tribades, Sappho, or oral sex between women in the influential medieval Juvenal commentary ascribed to Cornutus or in the mid fifteenth century commentaries by Gaspar Veronensis (c. 1400-1474), Guarinus Veronensis (1374-1460), and Omnibonus Leonicensus (c. 1412-c. 1474).⁸ Because there does not seem to have been a robust medieval commentary tradition on Martial’s *Epigrams*, it is not possible to track the same kind of evolution in glosses on them: Hausmann (1980). Nonetheless, his poems are crucial to the story I tell in this chapter. It is likely that three interrelated factors facilitated the sudden transformation in the discourse around sex between women: the recent arrival of print technology in Italy and the concomitant and nearly simultaneous preparation of new editions of Martial, Juvenal, and other classical authors; the exchange of ideas about these authors in Roman academies; and the dissemination of lectures on Martial and Juvenal that were presented at the University of Rome (or *studium urbis*) where Sabino and Calderino both taught.⁹ Seeking to prove this hypothesis will, however, have to wait for another time. Instead, in the pages that follow, I track the circulation of the new—or perhaps better, renewed—discourse on sex between women in glosses on Martial 7.67 and on a key passage in Juvenal’s *Sat.* 6 before concluding with a few remarks on the implications of the materials addressed here for the study of the history of sexuality.¹⁰

Of Variant Voracity in Martial 7.67

6.67 opens with a hyperbolic claim about the sexual exploits of a tribade named Philaenis and concludes by explaining that she does not perform fellatio because she considers cunnilingus to be more manly. The relevant sections, with the Latin found in the 1993 Loeb edition along with a slightly-modified version of D. R. Shackleton Bailey's English translation, read as follows:

Pedicat pueros tribas Philaenis
et tentigine saeuior mariti
undenas dolat in die puellas.
[...]
non fellat - putat hoc parum uirile -,
sed plane medias uorat puellas.
di mentem tibi dent tuam, Philaeni,
cunnum lingere quae putas uirile. (1-3; 14-17)

Philaenis the tribade sodomizes boys and, more cruel than a husband's lust, penetrates eleven girls per diem.

[...]
she does not suck men (she thinks that not virile enough), but absolutely devours girls' middles. May the god give you your present mind, Philaenis, who think it virile to lick a cunt.¹¹

By opening with the Latin verb *pedico*, this vicious and clever poem emphasizes that Philaenis penetrates boys anally. The verb characterizing her activities with girls in the poem's third line, *dolo*, is less precise. A common locution for sexual intercourse, the word more properly means 'to hack into shape' or 'to hew'. Its presence in modern editions is the result of an emendation first proposed in 1602.¹² All fifteenth and sixteenth century print editions have *uorat*, 'she devours', in the poem's third line, as in the quotation from the epigram that circulated in the Juvenal mentioned previously. That is, in Renaissance editions, the concluding explicit discussion of cunnilingus (*medias uorat puellas*, 67.15; *cunnum lingere*, 67.17) is anticipated in the third line of the poem, and period readers would have encountered a Philaenis who 'devours', rather than 'hacks' at, eleven girls a day. Even after the emendation was proposed, many seventeenth and eighteenth century editions continued to print *uorat* rather than *dolat*.¹³

While three Martial commentaries were printed in the fifteenth century, the 1478 commentary by Giorgio Merula (1430-1494) did not address the sexual content of 7.67 and the posthumously published 1489 *Cornucopiae* by Niccolò Perotti (1429-1480) was limited to the *Liber Spectaculorum* and Book 1 of the *Epigrams*. Therefore, only the first of the three, Calderino's 1474 commentary, need concern us here.

Apparently what most interested Calderino about 7.67 was its lesbian content. He opened his analysis of the poem by reproducing the epigram's first word—*paedicat* ('she sodomizes')—but rather than addressing what Philaenis might do with the boys who are the direct object of the verb, he immediately considered Philaenis' female partners: *Mulieres uirili concubitu uicissim abutebantur*, Martial 1474, sig. o2v ('Women in turn were abused in masculine coupling'). Calderino then explained that Juvenal condemned such women and quoted *Sat.* 6.320-22:

‘Lenonum ancillas posita Lauseia corona prouocat’ et paulo post ‘Ipsa Medullinae frictum crissantis adorat.’ (“‘having put aside her garland, Lauseia challenges the maids of the procurers” and a little further on “She herself worships the rubbing of Medullina’s undulating thighs”). This is followed by a discussion of the tribade and Sappho:

Latino verbo ‘fricatrices’ possunt appellari tribades. τριβω significat ‘frico’ Græco. Usus est Martialis præter hunc nullus auctor Porphyrione excepto, qui in verba illa Horatii : ‘Et mascula Sappho.’ Sappho, inquit, dicta esse mascula, vel quod dedit operam poeticæ (quod est viri et maris) vel quod tribas fuit.

Tribades can also be called with the Latin word ‘fricatrices.’ *Tribô* means ‘to rub’ in Greek. No author used the word but Martial, except Porphyrio about the following phrase in Horace: ‘And masculine Sappho.’ He remarks that Sappho was said to be masculine, either because she made works of poetry—that is, of men and of the masculine—or because she was a tribade.

Calderino here paraphrases what may be one of the most important Renaissance sources for Sappho’s same-sex preferences, a gloss by the second or third century grammarian Pomponius Porphyrio to the enigmatic expression *mascula Sappho* (‘masculine Sappho’) found in Horace’s *Epistles* (1.19.23). After these observations, Calderino explicates other expressions in the poem, including the word *uorat* (‘she devours’), both iterations of which (3; 15) receive the comment *lingendo et tribando* (‘by licking and rubbing’). The relationship between *lingendo* and *tribando*

is not immediately clear, although it can perhaps be explained by the explicit reference to the figure of the tribade in the opening line of the poem. In any case, Calderino clearly understood *uorat* to refer at least in part to oral sex.

The brevity of this discussion risks downplaying the importance of 7.67 for the Juvenal commentaries to which I am about to turn and arguably more broadly for the Renaissance discourse on sex between women. The Greek term *tribas* appears in the poem and invites glossing. That the only other early author Calderino knew of who used the word employed it in a discussion of Sappho brought her into his account of sex between women in his Martial commentary. Furthermore, 7.67 makes explicit mention of lesbian cunnilingus. This may very well have authorized Calderino and other humanists to find oral sex in Juvenal's discussions of women who have sex with women, where references are at the very least equivocal. Because Calderino quotes from the Juvenal passage addressing female homosexuality in his Martial commentary—and because his Juvenal commentary quotes from 7.67—we know that he thought of the accounts together. It is to the relevant passage in *Sat.* 6 and to commentaries on it that we now turn.

Cunnilingus and Confusion in Commentaries on Juvenal's Sixth Satire

Juvenal's *Sat.* 6 offers a misogynous screed against marriage. The lines that interest us here present the narrator's hyperbolic account of the sexual depravity of contemporary Roman women. In the Latin of the 2004 Loeb edition and Susanna Braund's accompanying English, he complains:

... quid enim Venus ebria curat?
 inguinis et capitis quae sint discrimina nescit,
 [...]
 i nunc et dubita qua sorbeat aera sanna
 Tullia, quid dicat notae collactea Maurae,
 Maura Pudicitiae ueterem cum praeterit aram,
 [...]
 inque uices equitant ac nullo teste mouentur.
 [...]
 Nota Bonae secreta Deae, cum tibia lumbos
 incitat...
 [...]
 leonum ancillas posita Saufeia corona
 prouocat et tollit pendentis praemia coxae,
 ipsa Medullinae fluctum crisantis adorat
 (300-01; 306-8; 311; 314-15; 320-22)

After all, when she's drunk does Venus care about anything? She doesn't know the difference between head and crotch. ... Go on, ask yourself why Tullia sneers as she sniffs the air, and what notorious Maura's 'foster-sister' says to her when Maura passes the ancient altar of Chastity ... and they take it in turns riding one another and thrash around with no man present. ... Everyone knows the secret

rites of the Good Goddess, when the pipe excites the loins ... Saufeia takes off her garland and issues a challenge to the brothel-keepers' slave girls. She wins the prize for swinging her hip, then she in turn worships Medullina's undulating surges.¹⁴

Two observations will help clarify how this passage was understood in humanist commentaries.

The first concerns a variant in line 322. Many fifteenth-century manuscripts and early print editions of the *Satires* have Saufeia worship Medullina's *frictum* ('rubbing') rather than her *fluctum* ('surges' in Braund's translation).¹⁵ Given that the tribade was known precisely for rubbing, this common variant, which we have already seen in Calderino's citation of the line in his Martial commentary, made it easy for commentators to think of the figure, at least once they had been introduced to her. The second concerns how the passage was understood globally.

While recent commentators such as Nadeau (2011) 174-92 propose that Juvenal here represents three separate incidents, Renaissance glossators did not understand the passage in this way.

Instead, humanist discussions of the 'drunken Venus', Maura and Tullia at the altar of Chastity, and the erotic exploits undertaken during the rites of the Good Goddess often influenced their proponents' understanding of the adjacent incidents. As a consequence, the apparent reference to oral sex early in the passage (6.301) sometimes affected discussions of subsequent sections and the later explicit descriptions of sex between women (6.311, 6.322) seem at times to have shaped glosses on the apparent reference to oral sex. This influence facilitated the identification of lesbian cunnilingus in the passage.

Already in the first print Juvenal commentary, issued in the same year as Calderino's Martial commentary, we find the three elements of a discourse on sex between women—references to the tribade, discussions of Sappho's sapphism, the inclusion of cunnilingus in the lesbian sexual repertoire—that are absent from the earlier manuscript tradition. In his 1474 *Paradoxa*, Angelo Sabino mentions both Sappho and the tribade in explicating Juvenal's phrase about Tullia and Maura taking turns at erotic riding (*inque uices equitant*, 6.311): *quidam Lesbydas hunc usum inuenisse perhibent hinc tribas Sappho dicta et Philenis tribas apud Martialem*, sig. h5r ('They say that a certain Lesbian woman invented this practice. Hence Sappho is called a tribade and Philaenis is called a tribade in Martial').¹⁶ As for cunnilingus, Sabino refers to it in his remarks on the line about a drunken Venus not knowing the difference between head and crotch (6.301): *ostendit eam fellatricem & lingentem quales multæ a Martiale dicuntur ut Philen ait Martialis "undenas uorat in die puellas"*, sigs. h4v-h5r ('He shows that she is a sucker and a licker. Many such women are spoken about by Martial. Martial says about Philaenis, "She devours eleven girls a day"'). Although Sabino's use of both *fellatricem* and *lingentem* in this gloss might imply that he was thinking of oral sex performed by a woman on a man as well as woman-on-woman cunnilingus, the Martial quotation about Philaenis (7.67.7) suggests that he understood Juvenal to refer in particular to a sex act performed on a woman by a woman. (As we shall see, these commentaries sometimes use vocabulary that refers to fellatio in specifically all-female contexts. Such instances deserve more attention than I can give them here.) Nothing in Juvenal's lines about the 'drunken Venus' specifies the gender of the potential recipient of oral attention. Sabino's understanding of the line about erotic riding (6.311) thus seems to have influenced his account of the earlier passage (6.301).

Calderino's commentary, printed one year after Sabino's *Paradoxa*, shares many details with its precursor. For example, in his remarks on *Sat.* 6.301, the line about the drunken Venus, Calderino writes that Juvenal *reprehendit in mulieribus quod sint fellatrices et lingant cunnos, quod in Philene notat Martialis*: "*Undenas uorat in die puellas,*" *præterea quod sint tribades, idest, mutuo fricent se*, sig. e1v ('chastises women for being fellatrices and for licking cunts—Martial notes about Philaenis that "She devours eleven girls a day"—and moreover, that they are tribades, that is, they rub each other reciprocally'). Both Calderino and Sabino invoke Martial 7.67, make explicit reference to oral sex between women, and mention fellatio without clarifying the term. Calderino thus also seems to have interpreted the apparent reference to oral sex—'she doesn't know the difference between head and crotch, 6.301'—in the light of the explicitly lesbian scenes that follow.

Such similarities are not coincidental. Sabino and Calderino both taught at the University of Rome in the early 1470s. They were also bitter rivals and exchanged accusations of plagiarism: Campanelli (2001) 21-26. Although much of Sabino's commentary was completed in the 1460s, before Calderino undertook serious study of Juvenal, his remarks about sex between women appear to be a late addition to his *Paradoxa in Iuuenalem*: they are absent from a manuscript draft that includes almost all of the text in the print version (Vatican Lat. Ott. 2850, fol. 80r). It is thus possible that Calderino was Sabino's source for this information—or that they shared a source. The question of whose glosses came first is however moot. What is significant is that the details about sex between women in the 1474 commentary seem to have become available only shortly before the printing of the text.

Calderino's commentary contains some relevant details not in the *Paradoxa*, including additional references to oral sex, two sources for Sappho's same-sex preferences (where Sabino offered none), and most intriguingly, a mistake that is implied but not made explicit in the earlier commentary. We have already seen Calderino's spectacular reference to lesbian cunnilingus in his gloss to Juv. 6.306. This line went unaddressed in Sabino's *Paradoxa*. Calderino further explains that *collactea* (6.307)—translated by Braund as 'foster-sister'; more literally, a woman nursed at the same breast—refers to the woman doing the licking (*nomen est mulieris lingentis*, sig. e1v).

Calderino's sources for Sappho's sexual predilections and his mistake appear in his explication of Juvenal's line about women taking turns riding (6.311). He writes:

Inque uices: Lesbiæ mulieres mutuo fricari primo instituerunt, unde apud Aristophonem λεσβίζειν id agere est. Martialis tribadas appellat a τρίβω, quod est frico. Qualis fuit Sappho, ut ipsa fatetur et Porphyrio docet. (sig. e2r)

And taking turns: Lesbian women first instituted mutual rubbing, whence in Aristophanes *lesbizein* means to do this. Martial calls them tribades from the Greek *tribô*, which means 'to rub.' Such was Sappho, as she confesses and Porphyry teaches.

Whereas Sabino offered no authority for his claims about Sappho's tribadism, Calderino gives two. One we have already seen: Pomponius Porphyry, whose gloss on Horace was paraphrased in Calderino's Martial commentary. The other, Sappho's confession, may very well refer to the (potentially fake) Ovidian 'Sappho to Phaon', *Heroides* 15.¹⁷

Calderino also gives far more information about the inventiveness of the Lesbians than his predecessor and here he goes astray. While Sabino merely remarked that *quidam Lesbydas hunc usum inuenisse perhibent*, sig. h5r ('They say that a certain Lesbian woman invented this practice'), presumably referring to women riding each other, Calderino claims that Aristophanes used the verb λεσβίζειν for the act in question and that it is synonymous with τρίβω ('to rub'). Calderino is right that Aristophanes uses the verb λεσβίζειν. It appears, for example, in *The Wasps* as an old man addresses a prostitute: ὁρᾷς ἐγὼ σ' ὥς δεξιῶς ὑφειλόμην/ μέλλουσιν ἤδη λεσβιᾶν τοὺς ξυμπότας (1345-6: 'Did you see how smoothly I stole you away just when you were going to start lesbianizing the guests?'). But he is wrong about the verb's meaning. Λεσβίζειν does not mean 'to rub' but rather 'to fellate': Jocelyn (1980) 31-33; Henderson (1991) 183-84.

Particularly given Calderino's preternatural skill at finding references to oral sex, this mistake is not easy to fathom. The most likely source for Calderino's interpretation is the Aristophanic scholia, available in manuscript during Calderino's lifetime. In its gloss to the lines from *The Wasps* quoted previously, we find the following: Τὸ λεσβιεῖν ἐπὶ αἰσχροῦ τάττεται. ἐπειδὴ οἱ λέσβιοι αἰσχουργοῦσι τῷ στόματι μολυνόμενοι. παρὰ τὸ ἱστορούμενον ὅτι παρὰ λεσβίοις τοῦτο πρῶτον ἢ γυνὴ ἔπαθε (Aristophanes 1498, sig. Z2r) ('To lesbianize refers to something

shameful, since Lesbian people engage in shameful conduct by being defiled in the mouth.

According to historical record, a woman among the Lesbian people was the first to undergo this thing'). If this explanation was Calderino's source, whether directly or mediated through another scholar, it would explain why he mentions that Aristophanes used the word λεσβίζειν and his claim about a Lesbian woman having invented the act in question. But it would not explain why he misidentified the act.¹⁸

While we may never be able to determine with certainty how this error came about, I can offer some tentative suggestions. When Calderino came upon the word λεσβίζειν, he might already have formed strong ideas about classical discussions of sex between women. Calderino's comments on Martial 7.67 share many details with his glosses on the Juvenal passage just discussed, including the etymology of the word τρίβω and remarks about Sappho's tribadism. They do not, however, refer to the sexual inventiveness of the Lesbian people or the word λεσβίζειν. Given that the Juvenal commentary was printed in 1475, a year after the Martial commentary, we can surmise that Calderino became aware of information about the meaning and origins of the term λεσβίζειν only after completing the earlier work.¹⁹ Perhaps preparing the Martial commentary led Calderino to associate sex between women primarily with rubbing, the act linked with the tribade, despite the prominent role given to lesbian cunnilingus in 6.67. Or perhaps the error was connected more specifically with Sappho, her origins in Lesbos, and reputation as a tribade. Given that in etymological terms, λεσβίζειν means 'to act like a person from Lesbos', Calderino might have been led to misconstrue the verb if he associated Lesbos strongly with tribadism rather than with fellatio. Of course, Calderino might just have

reproduced a mistake he found in another humanist's work. In any case, the error was long-lived. It was still being reproduced as late as 1614.

Let us now consider how Sabino's and Calderino's discussions of Sappho, the tribade, and lesbian cunnilingus in particular were received by subsequent commentators. Four other Juvenal commentaries would be printed in the fifteenth century; a fifth appeared in 1502. In his 1478 commentary, which was highly critical of his predecessors' work, Giorgio Merula suggested that the difference between *capitis* ('head') and *inguinis* ('crotch') in *Sat.* 6.301 was that between *nefas* and *fas*, or 'wrong' (literally, unspeakable) and 'right' (literally, speakable) without further clarification: Juvenal (1498) 88r. Moreover, he identified no sexual innuendo in Tullia's sneering, Calderino's memorable gloss notwithstanding. Merula did however understand *pendentis... coxæ*, 6.321 ('swinging her arse' in Braund's translation) to refer to sex between women who rub each other (*inter se ... confricabant*) and note that Martial called such women 'tribades' (89r). Sappho goes unmentioned as does cunnilingus.

The next print commentary, by Giorgio Valla (1447-1500), appeared in 1486. Valla's contribution to scholarship on the *Satires* is '[n]otable for its inclusion of the collection of old scholia': Sanford (1960) 223.²⁰ Like Merula, Valla did not find the passage quite as replete with cunnilingus as Calderino had, but he did refer explicitly to oral sex. In his remarks about the inability of a drunken Venus to distinguish between head and crotch (6.301), Valla included a citation from Horace's *Epode* 8 which he drew from the late antique commentary tradition: *De huiusmodi fæminis Horatius "quod ut superbo prouoces ab inguine ore allaborandum est tibi"* (Juvenal (1498) 88r) ('About such women Horace says: "In order to provoke it from an insolent

crotch your mouth will have to labor’’). So whereas Sabino and Calderino glossed the Juvenal line with reference to a poem serving to emphasize a lesbian interpretation of the reference to oral sex, namely Martial 6.67, Valla used a Horace citation drawn from a much earlier commentary tradition to ‘heterosexualize’ it. As for his interpretation of the sneering Tullia (6.306), he writes *Ipsam deridens, pudicitiam naso suspendit adunco et fastidiose sannam facit. Vel, ut alii, stertens grauem per nasum spiritum ducit*, 88r (‘Laughing, she hangs her modesty on her hooked nose and scornfully mocks. Or, according to others, snoring, she breathes heavily through her nose’). Valla did agree that the women taking turns riding (6.311) were having sex with each other, noting that such women were usually called tribades (88r), but rather than looking to Martial to adorn his remarks on them, he instead quoted substantial passages from Plato’s *Laws* (363c) and Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* (I:26) along with the corresponding section of Ambrose’s *Commentary on Romans*. Thus, in a kind of *translatio homophobiae*, Valla enlisted both pagan and Christian sources to construct a very different set of Lesbian commonplaces.²¹ Like Merula, he does not mention Sappho or cunnilingus.

It would seem that Antonio Mancinelli (1451?-1505) was not entirely convinced of the merits of Valla’s glosses. In his 1492 commentary, he returned to a more neutral understanding of the drunken Venus’ lack of discernment, writing that *inguinis* (‘the crotch’) represented *uuluae* (‘the vagina’) and *capitis* (‘the head’) represented *oris* (‘the mouth’) without specifying the gender of the potential partner: Juvenal (1498) fol. 87v. Moreover, unlike Valla, Mancinelli understood Tullia to be engaging in oral sex. He glossed the expression ‘Go now and wonder’ (6.306) by remarking that *Arguit modo mulieres fellantes & cunnilingas* (Juvenal (1498) fol. 87v) (‘Now he censures women who perform fellatio and cunnilingus’) while the phrase ‘she sniffs the air’

elicited *respiret occupato ore* ('she breathes with her mouth occupied'). Note once again the pairing of fellatio and cunnilingus, here in a specifically all-female context.²² Finally, *provocat*, 6.321 ('she challenges') generated a substantial discussion but rather than Valla's citations from Plato, Paul, and Ambrose, we find a series of references to Martial epigrams addressing sex between women (fol. 88v). While Mancinelli does discuss cunnilingus, there is once again no mention of Sappho.

The last two Juvenal commentaries I consider, by Josse Bade (1462-1535?), first printed in 1498, and by Giovanni Britannico (1450-1518?), first appearing in 1502, offer contrasting interpretations of these passages. Both authors understood the confusion of the drunken Venus as referring to oral sex. In the case of Bade, the gender of the potential recipient is ambiguous; his Venus does not know the difference between *inguinis, idest membri genitalis, et capitis, idest oris* (Juvenal (1522) fol. 70v) ('the crotch, which is to say the genital member, and the head, which is to say, the mouth').²³ On the other hand, Britannico, perhaps influenced by Valla, implies that Venus' partner is a man, at least if we take *fellatio* to be necessarily performed on a penis: an inebriated woman, he wrote, *non discernit... quid intersit inter fellationem et coitum; hoc est turpius ne sit crimen fellationis, an coitus* (Juvenal (1522) fol. 70r) ('cannot recognize what difference there is between fellatio and intercourse, that is, whether fellatio is a more shameful crime than intercourse'). Turning to the women at the altar of Chastity, Bade remarks that it is obvious that Tullia performs oral sex on another woman in *Sat.* 6.306:

I: hoc est uade et dubita, quasi dicat nisi stolidus ueris non dubitabis, sed facile percipisces qua id est quali. Sanna: Id est narium sonoritate: Tullia fellatrix illa,

seu cunnilinga. sorbeat: id est auide inspiret et recipiat per nares aera ... dum os in
fædo illo opere occupatum habet. (fol. 70v)

Go: That is go and wonder, as if to say, unless you are stupid you will not doubt
the truth, but you will easily understand what sort of thing it is. Mockingly: That
is, with the sound of the nostrils. Tullia is a fellatrix, or a cunnilinga. She sniffs:
That it, she eagerly breathes and receives the air through her nostrils... while she
has her mouth engaged in that shameful work.

Once again like Valla, however, Britannico offers a desexualized gloss on the same line: *Sorbeat
aera: Idest ore distorto et hianti respiret in contemptum Deæ* (fol. 70v) ('She sniffs the air: That
is, she breathes with mouth distorted and gaping in contempt of the Goddess'). Britannico and
Bade both describe the women taking turns riding (6.311) as engaging in sex with each other.
Their comments to this and surrounding lines demonstrate an acute awareness of the earlier
commentary tradition; Bade quotes a range of views from his precursors without mentioning
Sappho while Britannico reproduces Calderino's account including the discussion of Sappho
almost verbatim (fols. 71r-v).

To recap: in their glosses on *Sat.* 6.300-322, Sabino and Calderino both mention lesbian
cunnilingus, Sappho's same-sex preferences, and the figure of the tribade. The five subsequent
print commentaries all mention the tribade but only those of Mancinelli and Bade refer explicitly
to oral sex between women and only Britannico refers to Sappho's reputation as a tribade. The
differences between these commentaries, which reflect evolving conventions, different target

audiences, and sometimes bitter scholarly disagreement, merit more attention than I can give them here. What matters for the argument at hand is that despite its uneven reception by subsequent commentators, the renewed discourse around sex between women found in Sabino's and Calderino's commentaries would have continued to be available in its entirety to educated readers of Latin. Calderino's Juvenal commentary was still being printed as late as 1614. Moreover, Juvenal editions often included multiple commentaries. Readers were thus frequently able to compare different glosses to the same passage without consulting a second book. Finally, the commentaries most reproduced until the end of the sixteenth century—and by far—were those of Calderino, Bade, and Britannico, with the last two usually printed together: Sanford (1960) 179–82. We can therefore be sure that discussions of lesbian cunnilingus and Sappho's tribadism were available in Renaissance Europe from the 1470s onwards, at least to humanists with an interest in Juvenal.

Conclusion

The Latin poets addressed in this chapter are not esoteric. Martial and Juvenal were well-known in humanist circles during the Renaissance and are part of the canon studied by modern classicists. That their neo-Latin commentary traditions have not yet been analyzed by scholars interested in the history of sexuality has less to do with any lack in original popularity or circulation than with the modern scholarly division of labor and related disciplinary boundaries. Puff (2011) calls for a lesbian philology that would expand the corpus of texts under consideration by early modernists interested in the history of sex between women beyond the vernacular languages. While some medical and legal treatises in Latin have received attention

and scholars such as Andreadis and Mueller have begun to consider the treatment of Sappho in humanist commentaries, this hardly exhausts the potentially relevant archives. If such a project poses problems of expertise and linguistic competency, it also invites the possibility of more collaboration with scholars working in different periods and languages.

Beyond suggesting generally that Renaissance commentaries on and editions of classical authors merit more attention from scholars interested in the history of sexuality than they have thus far received, the analyses I have offered point to two areas particularly worthy of further research. One concerns humanist culture and likely involves the transformations in knowledge circulation entailed by the advent of print in Europe. Why do discussions of woman-on-woman oral sex, Sappho's sexual preferences, and the figure of the tribade, absent from the pre-print commentary tradition on Juvenal, appear suddenly around 1474 in the first print commentaries, and go on to have different fortunes? The other raises questions concerning the relationship between humanist erudition transmitted in Latin and vernacular print culture. It is clear that Sappho was associated with tribadism in widely-circulated neo-Latin commentaries from the 1470s but this link seems to have taken quite some time to become popular in vernacular texts. Why? And given its presence in Martial 7.67 and in popular Martial and Juvenal commentaries, how do we explain the apparent absence of lesbian cunnilingus in the early modern vernacular texts that have been the primary concern of scholars interested in the history of lesbian sexuality? Perhaps as we become better aware of what well-educated authors capable of reading Latin but writing in the vernacular could have known, we may find that they wrote about things we were not in a position to recognize earlier. On the other hand, our understanding of silences and lacunae may

shift if we suspect that they arise not out of ignorance but out of some kind of choice whose contours remain to be traced.

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¹ In addition to the works treated here, most of which focus on English material, see Bonnet (1995) on French, and DeCoste (2009) on Italian, literature. I would like to thank the SOCE collective, Lorenzo Calvelli, this volume's editor, and its anonymous readers for their astute feedback.

² DeJean (1989) argues for a relatively late emergence of 'information' about Sappho's erotic interest in women, showing how the editing and translating of her poetry in the sixteenth century frequently occluded same-sex desire. Conversely, Andreadis (2001) 28-30 observes that Domizio Calderino links Sappho to sex between women in his 1482 posthumously published commentary on *Heroides* 15 and more generally that the link was available in reference materials used by humanists.

³ On the tribade in early modernity, see in particular Park (1997); Traub (2002) 188-228; DiGangi (2011) 60-87. For a critique of Park and Traub that highlights references to tribade-like women in the Middle Ages, see Lochrie (2005) 71-89. For a survey of ancient references to tribades and an overview of the preceding scholarship, see Boehringer (2007) 261-314 as well as 146-49, where she challenges the widely disseminated notion that tribades were sometimes thought in antiquity to penetrate women either with their enlarged clitoris or a dildo.

⁴ Solely for convenience, I sometimes use 'lesbian' to mean 'female same-sex': modern sexual identities cannot be mapped onto early modern social categories in any obvious or easy way. As we shall see, some fifteenth century humanists linked Lesbos with sex between women.

⁵ In ingenious interpretations of ambiguous materials, Lochrie (1997) and Donoghue (1994) 225 discuss lesbian cunnilingus in the medieval and early modern periods.

⁶ All translations in this chapter are mine unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ As I discuss, the line appears differently in most modern editions.

⁸ The Cornutus commentary on *Sat.* 6, which I have consulted in a fifteenth-century manuscript, is edited by Hoehler (1894).

⁹ Grendler (2002) 199-248 and Lee (1978) overview the intellectual climate in Rome during this period.

¹⁰ Another Juvenal phrase, *Tedia non lambit Cluuiam*, *Sat.* 2.49 ('Tedia doesn't tongue Cluvia'), was also sometimes taken by humanists to refer to cunnilingus. The commentary tradition on this passage, which I hope to address in another context, supports my findings here.

¹¹ Shackleton Bailey translated *tribas* as 'Lesbian'.

¹² Martial's *Epigrams* are transmitted in three manuscript families, α , β , and γ . α does not include 7.67. In β , we find *dolet* (presumably subjunctive *dolare*, 'to hew'/'hack', rather than indicative *dolere*, 'to suffer pain') and *uorat* in γ , the basis for all print editions until 1602. The emendation *dolat* was apparently first proposed by Janus Gruterus (Martial 1602) 472-3. For overviews of the textual tradition, see Reeve (1983); Pasquali (1952) 415-27. For Book 7 specifically and 7.67, Vioque (2002) 13-17; 835.

¹³ At least one scholar misses the reference to cunnilingus in line three because she quotes from a modern edition while addressing the text's early modern circulation: Andreadis (2001) 44. The explicit reference to cunnilingus at the end of the poem is present in all unexpurgated versions; Mueller (1992) 110 recognized its availability in the Renaissance.

¹⁴ The passage later reveals that these women finally call for men to be let in to satisfy them, thereby participating in a long tradition of texts representing lesbian sex as foreplay before the main event with a man.

¹⁵ See Willis (1997) 74 for a recension.

¹⁶ On riding as a metaphor for sex, see Adams (1991) 165-66. On Philaenis in antiquity, see Boehringer (2007) 275-313.

¹⁷ On Ovidian authenticity, see, for example, Knox (1995) 12-14; Rosati (1996).

¹⁸ A similar explanation—without the insistence that a woman was the first person to ‘suffer’ the act—is given in the *Suidas* (1499) *s. v.* Λεσβίσαι. Calderino mentions the *Suidas* in his commentary on Ovid’s *Heroides*: 1482 (sig. h6v). For a provocative exploration of the implications of the Renaissance reception of the classical Greek link between Lesbos and fellatio through the Erasmian adage *lesbiari*, III.vii.70 (‘to be lesbianized’), see Blank (2011).

¹⁹ Further evidence that Calderino began thinking about λεσβίζειν and its relationship to sex between women only after completing the Martial commentary is offered by several notes discussing the verb that he added to the margins of the presentation copy of the commentary prepared for Lorenzo de’ Medici, which is dated 1 September 1473. The notes, which I hope to address elsewhere, are reproduced in Jocelyn (1980) 57 n. 205. On this manuscript, see Dunston (1968) 116-123.

²⁰ The meticulously edited ancient scholia, some of which date to the fourth century, can be found in Wessner (1931), who discusses Valla’s less careful textual practice (xx-xxiii).

²¹ This is not to imply that the other commentaries celebrate female same-sex activities—far from it—but their Christian beliefs do not overwhelm their philological or historical curiosity.

²² Juvenal specifies that Tullia and Maura pursue their nocturnal exploits *nullo teste*, 6.311, which Braund translates as ‘with no man present.’ *Teste* can mean both ‘witness’ and ‘testicle’.

²³ As in antiquity, *membrum genitale* in humanist Latin could designate both male and female genitalia.